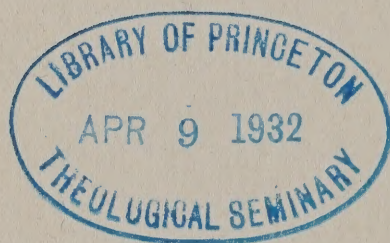


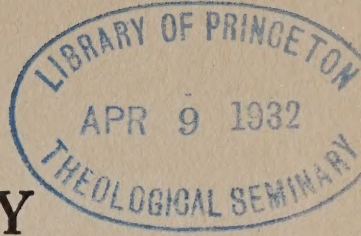
A SURVEY
OF SCRIPTURE



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For Review
A. C. Gaebelstein

A BRIEF SURVEY
OF SCRIPTURE



A BRIEF SURVEY OF SCRIPTURE

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I

FOREWORD

In his Bible classes at the Stony Brook School the author has long felt the need for a concise presentation of the entire contents of Scripture. The need is a universal one in that it involves a fundamental principle of good Bible teaching. For is it not true that intelligent study of any single Bible book, theme, or character demands at least a bowing acquaintance with the Word of God as a whole? Were Scripture merely a library of three-score odd books, this would not be the case. But Scripture is not merely a library; it is a close-knit organism of divinely inspired writings, united in theme and structure. This being the fact, the all-too-common procedure of studying the Bible piece-meal without any comprehensive foundation is patently mistaken. Of course, no one would deny that the very young child must begin naturally with the simplest Bible stories. But the older student, be he youth or adult, ought certainly to have the primary background of a brief view of the subject matter of God's Word presented as a unified whole. How else can

the New Testament be understood apart from the light thrown upon it by the Old Testament? Such a book as Romans, for instance, is rooted and grounded in things Israelitish. Indeed the life and mission of our Lord Himself cannot be fully understood without the Old Testament background.

It was to supply this need that the following pages were written. The book is intended to be put into the hands of young people who have had comparatively little training in Bible study. However, it may be used by Bible students of all ages, and should prove especially helpful for the Sunday School and for Bible study groups.

As a logical and simple basis for giving a structural coherence to this brief view of Scripture, the author has chosen the division of the Bible into five Pentateuchs, for which he is indebted to the late F. W. Grant and others. While it would be unwise to claim that this Pentateuchal plan is the only correct setting forth of Biblical structure, still it has the great merit of being readily understood, easily remembered, and true to the highest meaning of God's Word.

STONY BROOK, LONG ISLAND

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I

THE MIRACLE OF BIBLICAL STRUCTURE

The Bible is its own best apologetic. Within its covers there lies convincing proof of a unique quality and a divine origin. Were those who cavil at the authenticity of Scripture but to undertake an impartial and thoroughgoing investigation of the book, their attitude might undergo a marked change.

Chief among the internal evidences for the Bible is its coherent structure. An illustration will bring this point vividly before our minds.

Among the essential attributes of the greatest writers is the sense of form, known in literary criticism as architectonic power. Just as the architect must plan his edifice according to the laws of strong and symmetrical design, so the writer must build his thought-structure on similar principles. Indeed an author's eminence depends to a large degree upon his success in producing work that shows constructive force. The supremely great in literature—Dante, Milton, Shakespeare, Goethe, Bunyan and their

fellows—have possessed this architectonic power. Their masterpieces have been marked for unity and coherence, monuments of literature as strong as the pyramids.

With this fact in view let us imagine a great collection of works by a mixed assortment of writers. Here is a piece of historical biography by Plutarch, here a play by Shakespeare. Here are some lyrics by Keats, and here a sermon by Jonathan Edwards. A section from the legal code of Justinian stands next to some of the personal letters of Charles Lamb, while a prominent place is given to Milton's epic of *Paradise Lost*. Now let us suppose that this compilation, having happened to be bound together as one book, shows a striking underlying unity of structure. Would not this be an amazing phenomenon? What possible explanation short of the miraculous could account for the *structural* unity of so wide a selection of books written independently over so many years?

This, however, is the very phenomenon which we have in the Bible. About two score men took part in writing it. Few of them were highly educated. They represented all stations in life. Some, like Moses, David, and Solomon,

occupied places of highest power; others, like Peter and John, were humble laborers. One of the greatest was by trade a tent-maker. According to conservative reckoning they wrote over a period of about 1,600 years, for Moses began the Pentateuch about 1,500 B. C., while John wrote the Revelation about 97 A. D. None of them was a literary man by profession. Rather were they engaged in other pursuits. They were men of action—generals, princes, and kings; priests, prophets, and religious leaders; stout-hearted missionaries, struggling to make known to a pagan world the glorious gospel of Christ. Daniel was vice-regent of the Babylonian Empire; Ezekiel was a priest imbued with the spirit of ritualistic practices. Amos was a lowly herdsman. Luke was an educated physician. Yet this group, a veritable study in contrasts, produced history, poetry, drama, prophecy, laws, and narratives that, for perfection of form and beauty of expression, reach the heights of supreme greatness.

Were this all, one might well be amazed at such literary attainment by men of such varied occupations. But when one begins to grasp the fact that these writings, though produced independently and at different places, still are

knit together in organic unity, he can see behind it all only the guiding hand of Deity. For the Bible has structure. The individual books fit together like the stones of a mosaic. Running through each of them is the great theme of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, the Saviour of the world. Subsidiary are other linking themes. The whole is a structure of varied detail yet massive in strength like the architecture of some great cathedral.

II

THE KEY TO BIBLICAL STRUCTURE

Fittingly enough it is at the very beginning of the Bible that the key to its structure appears. That key lies in the first great natural division of Scripture. From most ancient times the first five books have been grouped together. Traditionally the work of a single author, Moses, united in theme, style, and treatment, they have for centuries been known by the term "Pentateuch," a word meaning "five books".

Historically and doctrinally the Pentateuch is of the greatest significance. It is the seed plot for the entire Bible, for in it are contained the germs of every major Christian doctrine. Were there no other evidence available, the frequency with which Christ quoted it and set His seal of approval upon it¹ would be sufficient to establish its importance. Considering, therefore, the leading place of the Pentateuch as the source of the mighty river of Bible doctrine, it is not surprising that it stands also as the pattern

¹ cf. for instance: Luke 24: 27, 44, 45. John 5: 45-47; 7: 19-23.

of Bible structure. For, as able scholars have pointed out, Scripture as a whole is divided into five Pentateuchs, of which that written by Moses is the first. Furthermore, each of the last four Pentateuchs carries out the pattern of the five books of the Mosaic Pentateuch. The accompanying diagram¹ will put these facts before the reader in a graphic way.

In order that we may understand the principles that govern this diagram, we must consider briefly the symbolical meaning of the first five numbers.

Every thoughtful Bible student knows that Scripture is full of types and symbols; persons, events, and things often have in God's Word a typical or symbolical meaning. Thus the pass-over lamb of Exodus portrays the sacrificial death of Christ, thus Joseph's life is a remarkable picture of the life and work of Christ, thus much of the language of the prophets is symbolical. So it is with the common numbers in Scripture; the digits are used with striking consistency of symbolism. While one cannot be dogmatic about matters of symbolism, it is nevertheless safe to say that Bible usage leads

¹ cf. "The Numerical Bible," F. W. Grant.

	OLD TESTAMENT				NEW TESTAMENT
	Covenant-History	Prophetical Books	Poetical (Experience) Books	Christian Scriptures	
The Law				Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John	
1. Genesis	Joshua	Isaiah	Psalms	The Acts	
2. Exodus	Judges and Ruth	Jeremiah	Job	Pauline Epistles	
3. Leviticus	Samuel and Kings	Ezekiel	Song of Solomon	Catholic Epistles	
4. Numbers	Captivity Books: Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther	Daniel	Ecclesiastes		
5. Deuteronomy	Chronicles	"Minor" Prophets	Proverbs	Revelation	

to the conclusion that the first five digits¹ have in general the following significance:

- 1—Beginning, source, creative power, rulership, harmony, righteousness, atonement, God.
- 2—Division, separation, strife. (Evil significance.)
Growth, covenant, fellowship, salvation, Christ (Good significance).
- 3—Manifestation, resurrection, Trinity, Holy Spirit.
- 4—Earthly things, man's number, weakness, testing, trial, experience.
- 5—Man's active power under the governance of God, responsibility.

And now, returning to the diagram of Penta-teuchal structure, let us first of all set down the fact that Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy correspond in general meaning with their numerical places in the diagram. Thus Genesis, being number one, is obviously a book of beginnings, of sources; in it God as Creator and Ruler is everywhere dominant. Numbers, to give another example, stands fourth. Its contents are seen to accord with the

¹ As a matter of fact, symbolic meanings attach also to other numbers, such as 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, and 40. However, for present purposes we are here concerned only with 1 to 5.

meaning of four; a book of the weakness and failure of God's people, it records their experience of forty years of testing in the wilderness. So it is with Exodus, Leviticus and Deuteronomy; in general purport each is in line with its numerical place.

Continuing our scrutiny of the diagram, we find that the books of the original Pentateuch stand out as patterns or models for the books occupying corresponding places in the other four Pentateuchs. We are able, then, to classify all the separate books as "Genesis," "Exodus," "Leviticus," "Numbers," or "Deuteronomy" books.

For instance, Joshua is a "Genesis book," because it records a new beginning in the start of the life of Israel in the Promised Land. Acts is an "Exodus book", in that it marks the separation of God's heavenly people (the church) from the world, just as the original Exodus tells of the removal of God's earthly people (Israel) from Egypt, the type of the world. Ezekiel, the priestly prophet, writes a "Leviticus book" in accord with the Levitical character of the manifestation of holiness through type and symbol. The Catholic Epistles (I and II Peter, James, John I, II and III, and Jude) are con-

cerned chiefly with the practical, earthly walk of God's people, and so fulfill their place as "Numbers books." And, as a final example, Revelation, like Deuteronomy, which is a governmental summing up of God's dealings with men, gives the consummation of all things both earthly and heavenly under the headship of Christ.

This in briefest statement is the logical basis of Biblical structure considered in Pentateuchal divisions. As one studies deeper into the subject, he is struck with the fact that correspondences are not limited to similarity in general purport. Rather is there a vital organic unity achieved by a number of great themes running through the entire Bible. While subject matter varies greatly, the major theme of the Christ is everywhere apparent in type, in pre-incarnation manifestation,¹ in prophecy, in biographical delineation, and in doctrine. So too the other Bible themes, such as the Chosen People Israel, sin and its consequences, God's dispensational dealings with man, link book to book in an inseparable whole.

With this chapter and its predecessor as an introduction, we are now in a position to turn to

¹ "The Angel of the Lord" of the Old Testament.

the Bible itself. Our aim will be concisely to summarize each book, using the Pentateuchal divisions as a guide and pointing out as we go along the inter-relationship of the books one with another. As an aid to memory, a key-word will in each case be given to suggest the gist of the book under consideration. It is, of course, obvious that to deal so briefly with a volume of such vast extent as the Bible will necessitate the omission of many important facts and the shortest treatment of even the greatest truths.

III

THE LAW—FIRST PENTATEUCH

As we have already seen, we have here not only the beginning but also the pattern of the Bible. Written about 1,500 B.C. by Moses, these books form the basis of all that is to follow in Scripture. Indeed it may safely be said that in them may be found, either directly or in symbol, every essential feature of the Christian religion.

Genesis (Beginnings)

Genesis¹, as the name implies, is a book of beginnings. Opening with a magnificent account of the creation, it tells of the origin of man, his happy state in Eden, and the first sin, to the far-reaching consequences of which together with its divine remedy the bulk of the Bible is devoted. Under sentence of death man is expelled from Eden.

As the race grows, it increases in wickedness, until the offended Deity wipes out all but righteous Noah and his family. After the flood there is another judgment upon the over-weaning

¹ The word is from the Greek, meaning "beginning."

ambition of man, as manifested in the tower at Babel. Thus far, the history has been universal in scope, and has been told with the utmost concision, thousands of years being covered in less than a dozen chapters. But at chapter twelve it narrows into the great current which flows throughout the entire Old Testament. For with the advent of Abraham, there is another beginning. The descendants of Abraham and Sarah, the Chosen People Israel or the Jews, as they are variously called, come upon the scene. And the remainder of the book records their history in the line of actual descent. Abraham, his son Isaac, his grandson Jacob, and his great-grandson Joseph are delineated with a wealth of detail, showing particularly the relation of each to God as founders of the race from which the Redeemer was to spring. With the death of Joseph in Egypt the book ends. Throughout it is characterized by the number 1 and its various meanings of beginning, creation, and especially God.

Genesis is a first book, being dominated by truths that accord with the symbolism of its numerical place. The same principle holds for Exodus and the other members of the initial Pentateuch, as well as for all the books of God's

Word. For, after all, each book harmonizes in message and essential quality with its structural position in the marvellous Bible organism.

Exodus (The Passover)

Like Genesis and, indeed, many titles of Scripture, the name Exodus aptly characterizes in its meaning the book it heads. The word signifies a "going out," a "departure," and thus fits precisely the central incident of the second book of the Pentateuch.

The children of Israel, a mere family migrating to Egypt in time of famine to enjoy the favor of their younger brother Joseph, as the end of Genesis tells, have become a great nation, dwelling in subjection to the Egyptians. Pharaoh oppresses the strangers within his gates. The cry of the afflicted Israelites ascends to God, who hears their petitions and sends a deliverer in the person of Moses. Following a series of ten miraculous plagues during which all that Egypt reverences is smitten, Pharaoh reluctantly consents to let the Israelites go, his adamant spirit broken by the awful visitation of the destroying angel and the tragic death of the first-born throughout the land. Israel alone escapes, for the sacrificial lamb is slain in each

faithful house and the blood sprinkled on the door. On this night of the Passover, the exodus takes place. But as the children of Israel flee, Pharaoh and his hosts pursue them, only to be swallowed up in the Red Sea, crossed triumphantly by Israel through the miraculous intervention of God. The chosen people are now on the peninsula of Sinai on their way to Canaan, the land promised their father Abraham. As they are encamped on the plain, Moses ascends the mount at the command of God, who reveals to him the divine Law, as stated in the ten commandments and their subsidiary precepts covering all phases of morality and government. Although the people have accepted this Law with its grave responsibilities, they are in reality so prone to sin that they fall into the idolatry of the golden calf at the very time when Moses is standing before God on Sinai.

So much for the narrative portion of Exodus. The remainder of the book details the Law as given through Moses, and contains explicit instructions for the inception of the priesthood and the setting up of the tabernacle as a place of worship.

The correspondence of the meaning of 2 with

all of these things is obvious. Exodus speaks of division and separation in the parting of Israel from Egypt. The book speaks also of salvation and redemption not only through Moses, the divinely appointed helper, but especially through the supernatural preservation of Israel at the Passover. And the idea of covenant and fellowship is written large, particularly in the legal section.

Leviticus (Holiness)

After the erection of the tabernacle, God gave His people definite instructions for the regulation of His worship. These rules are set forth in Leviticus. It is from the Levites that the book derives its name. They were the descendants of Levi. When the people had broken the covenant by making the golden calf, the Levites alone of all the tribes voluntarily returned to the Lord and showed loyalty to Him. Consequently the great honor of caring for the House of God and its sacred accoutrements was given them. The priesthood also belonged to the Levites, for, while it was assigned as hereditary to Aaron and his sons, Aaron was a descendant of Levi.

Unlike the rest of the Pentateuch, Leviticus

contains practically no historical narrative. Rather is it in the nature of a manual for the priests and Levites. To the casual reader, its details of ritualistic worship seem at the farthest remove from the life of the modern Christian. In fact it is doubtful if any book in the entire Bible is less understood than Leviticus. Yet it is a fact that no book contains a greater and more complete presentation of the truth of Christianity in all its fulness. Fortunately the Spirit of God has given us in the Epistle to the Hebrews a superb New Testament commentary upon Leviticus. From this we learn something of the eternal significance of the priestly ritual. Sacrifices and offerings, feasts and cleansings, all are types of the central truths of Christianity that cluster round the atonement made by the Saviour on the Cross. Indeed the typology and symbolism of the Levitical rules and regulations is a marvellous thing and cannot but arouse the faith of him who studies the book deeply.

Such facts as the foregoing make clear the harmony of Leviticus with its numerical position as third in the Pentateuch. The sanctuary was a cube, thus being marked by 3, and Leviticus centers round the sanctuary of the tabernacle and temple. The number 3 stands for

fulness or manifestation, particularly of the Persons of the God-head or Trinity. And, hidden under the typology of Leviticus, is the most complete unfolding of the glorious work of God through Christ and His Spirit that the Old Testament contains. Holiness to God is its keynote; sanctuary, sacrifices, and the entire worship speak of holiness.

Numbers (Wandering)

In Numbers the historical narrative is again resumed. After ten introductory chapters detailing the census and order of the great host of emigrants,¹ the children of Israel are described as at Kadesh-barnea, the gateway to the Promised Land. Here they wait, complaining because of the hardships of their journey. Moses sends out a band of twelve spies to reconnoitre the land of Canaan. The spies return, reporting a country of great richness and beauty, but filled with a terrible warlike people. To fare forth into this land, they say, means swift destruction at the hands of the cruel Canaanites. Only two spies, Caleb and Joshua, dissent, for they urge Israel to march on in faith and seize their inheritance. The people as a whole, however, are only too

¹ It is from this section that the book derives its name.

ready to be swayed by the majority of the spies. Filled with a spirit of rebellion and unbelief, they murmur bitterly against Moses and Aaron for leading them to a place of such danger. God's righteous wrath is kindled at the failure of Israel, and He condemns them to a period of wandering in the wilderness as a penalty for their unbelief. It is worthy of note that the expedition of the spies was forty days in length and that the wanderings in the wilderness were to consume forty years. Of these wanderings and related incidents the remainder of Numbers speaks, recording toward its close some laws and ordinances pertaining to the final possession of Canaan. Out of the great multitude that stood at Kadesh-barnea, only the two faithful spies, Joshua and Caleb, are to enter the Promised Land.

The connection of all this with 4 is at once apparent. 4 is the number of trial, of testing, and of temptation; and Numbers as a book exhibits precisely these features from beginning to end.

Deuteronomy (Second Law)

Deuteronomy, the last of the first Pentateuch, is in the nature of a recapitulation of God's dealings with His people and a summing up of the

Law, as recorded in the foregoing books. In literary form much of it is oratorical, Moses addressing Israel as God's spokesman. Certain chapters¹ are of great prophetic significance. The book ends with the death of Moses and the choice of Joshua as his divinely-appointed successor. Fittingly enough, the word Deuteronomy means "Second Law." With this thought of a summing up of God's dealings with His people the place of Deuteronomy as the fifth book is in full accord. For 5 is the number of man's active power under the governance of God; and the reiteration and forceful summary of the divine law at the end of the Pentateuch throws into clear relief man's responsibility under God's control.

¹ 29, 30.

IV

COVENANT-HISTORY— SECOND PENTATEUCH

When the Law was given to the children of Israel through Moses and when Israel accepted it with all its implications,¹ God entered into what may be termed a covenant relationship with His people. As the record tells us, Israel agreed to obey the Law and God covenanted to reward them good or evil according to their obedience. The basis of the covenant, then, was the Law. The history of this momentous transaction is given in the second Pentateuch of Scripture which tells the story of Israel's relation to the solemn covenant of Sinai. And this is precisely what we should expect from the numerical place of this Pentateuch; 2 speaks of testimony, covenant, and salvation in a good sense, and strife and separation in an evil sense. And, as we shall see, these very things characterize this second of the great Scripture divisions.

Joshua (Conquest)

In Joshua we find another Genesis book,

¹ Exodus 19: 3-8.

though on a more restricted scale, for the scope of this Second Pentateuch is throughout narrower than that of its predecessor. However, the book truly marks a new beginning. Led by Joshua the Israelites march into the Promised Land. The first twelve chapters record the conquests of Israel. The story of Rahab, the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, the taking of Jericho and of Ai, and the victory at Gibeon when the sun stood still and the famous "long day" occurred—these concern the conquest of Canaan. The remainder of the book deals with the partition of the Promised Land, and contains the last words of Joshua. The tone of the book is that of joyful conquest; Joshua and his people act generally in faith and dependence upon God. Victory is the result. It need hardly be added that 1 with its various meanings in relation to beginning and to God characterizes the book of Joshua.

Judges (Rescue from Ruin)

In decided contrast is Judges, a book that illustrates perfectly the combined meanings of 2. Israel, in possession of Canaan, turned away from God. The result was a state of governmental and moral anarchy. For the Chosen People

had no earthly ruler; their government was entirely theocratic in that God was their supreme magistrate, and the human leaders ruled only under His guidance. Thus when apostasy came, order fled and chaos reigned in Israel. The situation is tersely summed up in the words of the book itself, "Every man did that which was right in his own eyes."¹ As a result the once fearless conquerors of Canaan became the ready prey of all enemies, disunion and international strife having ruined their national defense. All of this accords only too well with the evil sense of 2—strife, separation, and disharmony.

But there was light even in years of such blackness that historians have called them "the dark ages of Israel." God did not utterly forsake His people. When all seemed lost, He raised up from among the Israelites "saviours" or "judges" who ruled the people for Him. It is from these judges (there were thirteen of them) that the book takes its name. And thus the good meaning of 2 is illustrated, for the judges raised up in time of national crisis clearly testify of help and salvation. Of the judges, some, like Samson, Deborah (a woman), and Jephthah, are well-known; the others, such as Othniel, Ehud, Sham-

¹ Judges 17: 6.

gar, Tola, and Jair, are among the obscure characters of Scripture.

Ruth (Kinsman-Redeemer)

But the blackness of these dark ages was not wholly impenetrable, as the little book of Ruth so beautifully shows. Describing the time covered by Judges, it gives the lighter side of the picture. It is the story of Ruth, a young Moabitess, who married one of the Israelites. On the death of her husband she remained loyal to Naomi, her mother-in-law, and, forsaking all, followed Naomi to her husband's land. Here the faithful Ruth found love and protection, and finally married Boaz, her kinsman. The simple narrative is told with an idyllic beauty and perfection of style that give it a place of unsurpassed excellence among the short-stories of the world. In its typical teaching it speaks of salvation and points to the Redeemer, for according to the genealogical records, Boaz and Ruth were in the direct line of Christ's ancestry.¹ And through it all the good sense of 2 is most beautifully illustrated.

Samuel and Kings (Monarchy)

I and II Samuel and I and II Kings occupy the

¹ Matthew 1: 5.

third place in the Second Pentateuch. They are in reality one book and were considered as such in the ancient Hebrew manuscripts. In them is recorded another great period in the history of Israel—that of the monarchy. Though God's desire for His people was a theocratic government in which He was the acknowledged Ruler, Israel wanted a king, so that they might be like the other nations. They had their wish, but the monarchy was from the first ill-fated. From Saul through Zedekiah, the majority of the kings were unworthy of their high office. Even the greatest, such as Solomon and David, had their periods of grave iniquity and departure from the Lord's precepts.

The narrative of these times is thrilling, the life of David being particularly abundant in the heroic. Such incidents as David's conflict with Goliath are dramatic in the extreme. Under David and Solomon the monarchy reaches its highest peak, the various tribes being united in one kingdom with Jerusalem as capital. But with the accession of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, the decline begins; the people, oppressed beyond measure, rebel and ten of the tribes secede, to set up in the North of Palestine the rival kingdom of Israel with Jeroboam as ruler. From

this point the books of Kings record the parallel fortunes of the two nations, Israel in the north and Judah in the south. It is in each case a melancholy story of decline and failure lightened by the reigns of a few righteous kings like Azariah, Hezekiah, and Josiah. For Israel, the throne record of which is a continual story of violence and usurpation, no less than nineteen dynasties appeared in a few hundred years, the end coming through conquest by Assyria in 722 B.C. The ten tribes are scattered, to be lost until this day. Judah is the more stable of the two, the line of David, of which the Messiah was to come, remaining necessarily intact. But about a century and a quarter after the overthrow of Israel, Judah falls prey to Nebuchadnezzar and the nation is carried away captive into Babylon.

Thus end the efforts of the Lord's people to be like the other nations. Their strength lay in their peculiar character as a people set apart by God to be governed by Him in a true theocracy; this privilege surrendered, their power was gone.

Throughout this monarchical history the sanctuary is of central importance. Restored to its rightful place by David, the tabernacle or dwell-

ing-place of Jehovah is under Solomon made into a glorious temple, while under Zedekiah it is despoiled by the invading Babylonian. The relation of 3 to this unifying factor is plain; 3 as a number speaks of the sanctuary where God is manifest. Again, in these books of Samuel and Kings the prophets first come into great prominence; it is here that we read of Samuel, Nathan, Elijah, and Elisha. And the prophetic office, consisting as it does in the fore-telling and forth-telling of God's purpose, is essentially one of manifestation, being thus in harmony with the underlying meaning of 3. Moreover, it is worthy of note that David, the outstanding character of the books is, as prophet, priest, and king, a three-fold type of Christ.

Ezra and Nehemiah (Rebuilding)

In the fourth place stand the books of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. Because of a common historic period and a common point of view they are logically to be considered together. They all center round the time of captivity, shortly following the overthrow of Judah. Ezra and Nehemiah deal with several expeditions of captive Israelites back to Jerusalem. In these books the element of God's hand directing the life and

walk of His people during a time of intense trial is strongly marked.

Ezra tells of the return of a remnant of about forty-two thousand to Jerusalem under Zerubbabel in 536 B.C. Their purpose was to restore the ruined temple, and they succeeded in laying the foundations. Seventy-eight years after Zerubbabel's expedition, Ezra, a notable scribe, followed and restored the law and the ritual of worship. In each case, progress was made only against the most intense opposition from hindering enemies.

Fourteen years after the return of Ezra, Nehemiah, the cupbearer of King Artaxerxes, led still another expedition of faithful Jews back to Jerusalem. The book of Nehemiah records their success in rebuilding the wall of the city and in restoring a measure of civil authority in the face of persistent and demoralizing persecution. The book closes with the restoration of the temple worship.

Esther (Guidance)

Esther has to do with the great majority of Jews that remained in Babylon. It tells a story which for dramatic plot and absorbing interest is unrivalled in all fiction. Only through the

heroic intervention of the young Jewish Queen Esther are the captives of Judah saved from extinction through the cruel conspiracy of the wicked Haman. Although the name of God is not once mentioned in the book,¹ still His guiding hand is clearly evident. Dr. Arthur T. Pierson called this book "the rose window" of the Old Testament, dimly but beautifully reflecting the light of redemption through its vivid panes. To this day faithful Jews celebrate in the feast of Purim the deliverance recorded in Esther.

The harmony of these Captivity Books with the signification of 4 needs little comment. They show a true correspondence with the Book of Numbers; as the Israelites a thousand years before had wandered in the wilderness of Sin because of unbelief, so here they are shown tried and tested in the wilderness of the world, suffering the result of a later apostasy.

Chronicles (Monarchy-Recapitulated)

Comparatively little remains to be said of I and II Chronicles. As in the case of Samuel and Kings, the two books of Chronicles were originally one. The ground covered is essentially that

¹ Scholars believe that, as Esther was part of the annals of Persia, the name of God was kept out by the heathen historians.

of Samuel and Kings, the chief difference being the genealogies at the opening of I Chronicles and the particular emphasis throughout both books upon Judah. It is plain that here is a typical Deuteronomy book, a recapitulation of God's dealings with His people during the monarchical period. The attendant truth of man's responsibility and power under God's governance of which 5 speaks, is clear.

V

PROPHETICAL BOOKS— THIRD PENTATEUCH

The prophetic office is concerned chiefly with the manifestation of God's message to man. The prophet is a "forth-teller," one who speaks through direct inspiration the eternal counsels of the Almighty. He is also a "fore-teller" in that his message often unveils the future. It is, therefore, highly appropriate that the prophetic books should stand as the third of the five Pentateuchs of Scripture, for 3 is the number of manifestation, and of all the Old Testament books the prophets give the most complete revelation of the character of God. In them the glory of the Father is resplendently reflected, the work of the Son is fore-shadowed in hundreds of details, and the Holy Spirit is manifest prior to His gracious mission as Comforter of every Christian believer. No portion of the Old Testament speaks more fully of the Trinity than the prophetic books.

Isaiah (Fifth Gospel)

The Genesis of this great section of the Scrip-

ture is Isaiah. Here in one book are all the themes and elements of written prophecy. It is a marvellous beginning for the prophetic word. Isaiah's message deals chiefly with the Messiah. Indeed so evangelical is this prophet, so much does he have to say of Christ, that his book has been called "the fifth gospel." For instance, the fifty-third chapter, though written about seven hundred years before the time of Christ, is a marvellous portrayal of the atoning sufferings of the Saviour. The other subsidiary themes of prophecy are present also; Israel figures largely and the Gentile nations also have their place, while the book closes with a splendid vision of the great consummation when Christ as King shall return in glory. True to its Genesis place, it contains the roots of all the great prophetic doctrines.

Isaiah lived in the eighth century before Christ, and prophesied for over sixty years during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. In literary values his prophecies mark a high point in sublimity. The section beginning with chapter forty is particularly notable for its rhythmic beauty.

Jeremiah and Lamentations (Woe upon Judah)

The second of the prophets is Jeremiah, au-

thor of Lamentations as well as the longer book which bears his name. Called to exercise the high office of prophet when but a youth, he delivered his great messages during the last years of the Kingdom of Judah at the beginning of the seventh and close of the sixth centuries before Christ. His life was one of unusual hardship and persecution. Because of his forecast of defeat during Nebuchadnezzar's siege of Jerusalem, he was accused of treachery to his nation, being finally cast into prison. But he persisted in sounding the divine warning; the note of doom is prominent in the pages of his book. Within his lifetime the prophesied judgment descended. Jerusalem, under the weak king Zedekiah, fell, and the princes and inhabitants were carried off into Babylon by the great Nebuchadnezzar, who regarded Jeremiah with particular favor and gave him the choice of going to Babylon or remaining at Jerusalem. The prophet chose to remain at Jerusalem with those of his countrymen who were not taken to Babylon. When Gedaliah, the governor of Judah, was murdered, Jeremiah was compelled to go to Egypt with the Jews. His last prophecies were delivered at Tahpanhes in Egypt.

As has already been stated, Jeremiah's proph-

ecies are largely occupied with the fortunes of the Jewish people. He not only warns against the coming captivity but also points to the future time of restoration, when the kingdom will be set up anew with Christ upon the throne of David. There is in his book a strongly Messianic note. Particularly significant as well is the deep spiritual tone of Jeremiah's prophecies which looks forward to the day when sacrifices of animals will no longer suffice to approach God. Indeed there is a profound personal element in Jeremiah's religion that is akin to the experience of the great New Testament characters. Incidental portions foretell judgment upon the wicked Gentile nations.

Lamentations is an elegy of five chapters, showing in beautiful, poetic form the love and sorrow of the Lord for the very people whom, during the troublous days of Jeremiah's life, He was chastening so severely with the Babylonian captivity. The book is an extended acrostic. Each Chapter except the third has twenty-two verses, each verse beginning with a letter of the Hebrew alphabet in order. The third chapter consists of sixty-six verses, which are arranged in groups of three, each group beginning in order with a letter of the alphabet.

That these two books, which stand second in the third Pentateuch, are concerned with strife and separation, the evil sense of 2, is clear. But the brighter side also has its place, as is seen by the Messianic passages and the prophecies of the restoration, all of which yield the good sense of 2—deliverance and salvation.

Ezekiel (Prophet-Priest)

Contemporary with Jeremiah was the prophet whence the book of Ezekiel draws its name. However, in contrast to Jeremiah the greater part of Ezekiel's life was spent in Babylon, where he was exiled from Judah while a comparatively young man. Here, by the river Chebar, he saw the visions and received the prophecies which God revealed through his instrumentality. Ezekiel is unique among the prophets in having been called to his work from the priesthood. His priestly background with its consequent familiarity with the sanctuary undoubtedly influenced his writings. Like Jeremiah he prophesied the final overthrow of Jerusalem and foresaw the great captivity as a punishment for the sins of the city and nation. In common with the other prophets he also pointed out the impending judgments of the

heathen nations, particularly the oppressors of Israel. And in harmony with his fellow prophets he too looked forward to the future glorious restoration of Jerusalem. It is in connection with this last fact that one of the unusual features of his book arises. He closes his prophecy with a great vision of the restored temple and its environs. All is revealed in the light of an ideal beauty and perfection. The small hill of Zion becomes a great mountain topped by the magnificent buildings of a more glorious sanctuary. From the temple flows a mighty river, bringing quickening and refreshment to all surrounding territory. Finally the prophet details the division of the restored land among the reinstated tribes of Israel.

In the book of Ezekiel symbolism and parable occupy a large place. Some of the parables are in dramatic form in that they were acted out by the prophet himself. The symbolic visions, such as that seen in the first chapter, breathe an atmosphere of mystery and of glory.

As the book of the prophet-priest, Ezekiel fills its third or Levitical place; its numerical significance, therefore, needs little comment. The sanctuary is prominent in vision and prediction, and the great symbolic visions of the prophet

testify to the glory and holiness of the Lord. It is suggestive also that God constantly addresses Ezekiel by the words "Son of man", the phrase being used no less than ninety-one times throughout the book. The title shows the universal importance of these messages; just as "Son of Man" is used in the New Testament of Christ as Saviour not of the Jews alone but of the whole race, so its use in connection with Ezekiel points to truth that transcends the narrow confines of Judaism.

Daniel (World-History Revealed)

Daniel, the fourth and last of the major prophets, was, like his older contemporary Ezekiel, a captive in Babylon, having been carried away from Jerusalem when but a boy. He was of princely lineage and, with three other young Jews, was given a place in the household of King Nebuchadnezzar himself. The first six chapters of the book are historical, their contents being well known to most readers of the Bible. Here are recorded Daniel's rise to prominence through the interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's forgotten dream, the miraculous preservation of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego in the fiery furnace, Belshaz-

zar's riotous feast with its dramatic sequel of the portentous writing on the wall, and God's care of the faithful Daniel in the lion's den. Throughout trial and persecution the young captive remains loyal to his God. Under Nebuchadnezzar he reaches a place as viceroy, only to live for years in obscurity, until he comes into sudden prominence through reading the message of doom written by the mysterious fingers on the plaster of Belshazzar's banquet hall. The historical section ends with Daniel, an aged man, ruling as first in authority under Darius.

The remainder of the book, chapters seven through twelve, contains some of the most remarkable prophecies in all Scripture. Highly symbolical, the imagery of these visions is so consistent and their details so abundant and pointed in meaning that their reference to actual historical events cannot be mistaken. Indeed so definite are these prophecies that critics who deny the supernatural have had no other recourse but to endeavor to date the book after the time of fulfilment of some of the most striking predictions.

Remarkable also is the prophetic scope of Daniel. Unlike the other prophets, his visions concern not only nor even chiefly the Jews.

Rather does Daniel see in broad outline world-history. Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, the empires of the past, merge with the confederated nations of the future as they pass in vision before his inspired gaze. Perhaps the most amazing piece of prediction in all Scripture is found in the ninth chapter, where in connection with the prophecy of the seventy weeks is pre-written with absolute accuracy the time of the death of the Messiah.

4 is the number of trial, of testing, and of earthly things. The appropriateness of Daniel as a book corresponding to Numbers is very clear. In the careers of Daniel and his companions are exemplified testing and trial, while the prophecies occupy a place apart, dealing, as they do, so largely with the history of the great Gentile powers.

“Minor” Prophets

As the Deuteronomy of the prophetical Pentateuch we have not one but twelve smaller books. Commonly known as “the minor prophets,” they are minor only in length not in content. Taken as a whole, they comprise a typical Deuteronomic summing-up of prophetic utterance, and their oft-repeated note of warning and

hovering judgment implies the responsibility of man to God of which 5 speaks. In briefest statement their salient points are as follows:

Hosea (Unfaithful Israel)

Under the allegory of a sinful wife, cast away by the righteous anger of her husband but finally forgiven and restored, the prophet speaks of Jehovah's relation to His apostate people, the nation Israel.

Joel (Locust Plague)

Joel's prophecy grows out of the description of a terrible plague of locusts which troubled the land of Judah. The description, however, broadens into a magnificent vision of the Day of the Lord, which is to bring judgment upon the Gentiles and blessing to restored Israel. Of especial note is Joel's great prophecy of the bestowal of the Holy Spirit.¹

Amos (Warnings)

A herdsman of Judah, Amos was called of God to go up to Israel, where he prophesied the coming doom of the northern kingdom, then at the apex of its power under the wicked Jeroboam II. The oracles of God are sure, and within

¹ Joel 2: 28, 29.

fifty years of Amos's denunciation, the proud kingdom of Israel fell to pieces at the onslaught of the invading Assyrians. As a prelude to the prophesies having to do with Israel, Amos's first chapter sounds the doom of neighboring Gentile cities, such as Damascus, Gaza, Ashdod, and Tyrus.

Obadiah (Fall of Edom)

The shortest book in the Old Testament, this single chapter of twenty-one verses is concerned exclusively with announcing the approaching judgment of Edom, the nation founded by Esau, hostile brother of Jacob. Living in a desert fastness with Petra, a city cut out of the rocky cliffs, as capital, the Edomites were the hereditary enemies of Israel. Obadiah's prophecy was literally fulfilled, for Petra today is an uninhabited relic of the past.

Jonah (Unwilling Missionary)

Jonah, a narrow Jew, receives a divine commission to call Nineveh, the great capital city of Assyria, to repentance. Such is the prophet's bigotry that he tries to escape the divine errand by taking a ship for Joppa. While at sea, he is cast overboard during a terrific storm, is

swallowed by a great fish¹, and, after three days, is cast upon the shore. He goes to Nineveh and delivers the warning. The city repents, and Jonah, in his mistaken zeal, repines at the escape from destruction of the Gentile multitudes. By the parable of the sheltering gourd, God shows Jonah an object lesson in mercy. The book sounds an advanced note of universal religion, and teaches the true missionary spirit. It is unfortunate that its great and important lessons have been obscured by bitter controversy over the so-called "whale" miracle.

Micah ("Hear Ye")

This prophet was contemporary with Isaiah. His book falls into three prophetic strains, each one beginning with the words, "Hear ye." In the first the grievance of Jehovah against Israel and Judah because of their manifold sins is detailed. The second promises the millennial restoration of Zion, the temple, and the people, and looks forward to a great assemblage of all nations under the Messiah. A magnificent conversation in dramatic form between the Lord and His people comprises the third section,

¹ It is worthy of note that the word "whale" does not appear in the original text.

wherein His government is justified and assurance is given that amid His judgments He will not forget mercy. Of great significance is Micah's exact prophetic designation of the birth-place¹ of Christ, the Messiah.

Nahum (Fall of Nineveh)

Like Obadiah, Nahum is a prophet with a single theme. Approximately one hundred and fifty years after Jonah, he sounded the death knell of Nineveh, which had forgotten its repentance after Jonah's warning and had returned to its career of violence, bestiality, and idolatry. About one hundred years after Nahum the city was destroyed utterly, to remain completely lost until the pick of the modern archeologist disturbed its age-old oblivion. This book should be remembered as the sequel to Jonah.

Habakkuk (Justification by Faith)

Habakkuk is among the most exalted and spiritual portions of the Old Testament. Looking forward to the coming Babylonian captivity, it seeks to justify the holiness of the Lord in allowing His people to be chastised by the heathen hosts of Nebuchadnezzar. The em-

¹ Micah 5:2.

phasis is upon the holiness of God rather than the fate of Israel. At the close Habakkuk breaks into a great psalm that reaches heights of poetry unsurpassed in all Scripture. The book is doubly memorable because St. Paul uses a phrase from its second chapter¹ as the basis for the great doctrine of justification by faith as expounded in Romans and Galatians.

Zephaniah (Day of the Lord)

As in the case of Habakkuk, Zephaniah prophesied in the days immediately preceding the Babylonian captivity. Under King Josiah there had been a notable revival in Judah. Outward forms of idolatry had been obliterated. But beneath the show of righteousness there was the old moral iniquity and inward desire for idols. It was this hidden corruption that Zephaniah denounced. The book also, looking far into the future, warns of the judgment of the nations at the Day of the Lord, and points to the kingdom restoration of Israel.

Haggai (Rebuild the Temple)

The three remaining "minor" prophets lived after the exile in the times described in the Cap-

¹ "The just shall live by his faith." Habakkuk 2: 7.

tivity Books (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther). Haggai was a contemporary of Zerubbabel, who led the first detachment back for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. His prophecy, which covers a period of but a few months, has just one theme—to stir the returned Israelites from their lethargy to renewed energy in completing the restoration of the temple.

Zechariah (Symbolic Visions)

Similar to the theme of Haggai is the immediate occasion of Zechariah's prophecy. But while Haggai spurs on the people by means of direct exhortation, Zechariah brings to them symbolic visions. These, ten in number, cover the first six chapters of the book. The next two chapters have to do with questions concerning the mission from Babylon, and the last five chapters contain a most important strain of Messianic prophecy.¹ Zechariah is easily the chief of the "minor" prophets; his book is linked to Daniel and Revelation in its apocalyptic style.

Malachi (Judgment on Restored Remnant)

The last of the Old Testament prophets bears

¹ Among the many striking Messianic predictions of Zechariah are the following: 9: 9 (the King riding into Jerusalem on an ass); 11: 12, 13 (the Good Shepherd betrayed for thirty pieces of silver); 12: 10 (the crucifixion).

a three-fold message: the love of God for His people, denunciation of the sins of both priests and people, and the coming Day of the Lord. As a whole the book shows the spiritual judgment of God upon the hypocritical life and worship of the remnant which had returned from captivity. The prophecy closes on a Messianic note with both the First and the Second Advents of Christ in view.

VI

POETICAL (EXPERIENCE) BOOKS— FOURTH PENTATEUCH

Fourth among the five great Pentateuchs of Scripture is the group of books commonly known as poetical. While the designation aptly describes their form, it is not so descriptive of their content. The key to this is rather the number 4, as indicated by the position of this Pentateuch in the Biblical structure. The number of testing, of earthly things, and of responsibility naturally speaks of experience, a thought that sums up the larger significance of the Psalms, Job, Solomon's Song, Ecclesiastes, and Proverbs.

Psalms (Songs, Hymns)

In the Psalms we have the Genesis of these Experience Books. As we have already seen, the first book of each Pentateuch has a magnitude of scope that not only gives it headship over the books that follow but also lends it a decided introductory character. So it is with the Psalms. As the series of books which they head is primarily poetical, they are naturally

not concerned with the presentation of an historic narrative. Consequently the Psalms are an introduction or Genesis of ideas and divine counsels rather than historical facts.

Perhaps no portion of Scripture is dearer to the hearts of Christian believers of every sect and every tongue than the Psalms. Written over a period of more than a thousand years, these one hundred and fifty poems, varying in length from the thirty-three words of the 117th to the one hundred and seventy-six verses of the 119th, are the devotional classic of the world. When they were first collected in post-exilic times, they found a practical use as the hymnal of the second temple at Jerusalem. Their appeal, however, is universal, for they plumb the deeps of spiritual feeling. Today, no less than thousands of years ago, they bring closer to God all who seek and love Him. In the words of Dean Church, "The Psalms are as living as when written . . . they were composed in an age at least as immature as that of the Veda; but they are now what they have been for thirty centuries, the very life of spiritual religion—they suit the needs, they express as nothing else can express, the deepest religious ideas of the foremost in 'the files of time.' "

The Psalms represent the work of various authors. David, the great poet-king of Israel, probably wrote over seventy of them; others who contributed were Moses, Solomon, Asaph, the sons of Korah, and Ethan the Ezrahite. There is a remarkable consistency and unity in their arrangement, which is that of the Pentateuch, the one hundred and fifty poems being divided into five sections. Of this fact the ancient Jewish scholars took especial account, calling the Psalms "The Pentateuch of David."

Aside from the devotional element which underlies the Psalter as a whole, the Psalms are concerned chiefly with the Messiah, Jehovah, the Law, and the glory and magnitude of Creation. An important, though too little known fact, is that the Psalms rank among the major books of prophecy. In particular many of them are Messianic in that they look forward to Christ; their predictive element, however, is less historical than experimental. The very innermost thoughts and heart-searching of the Messiah in His divine mission of salvation through atonement are pre-written in these marvellous prophetic poems. Some indications of the immense importance of the Psalms, especially as prophecy, may be gleaned from the use which

apostolic writers made of them, for they are more frequently quoted in the New Testament than any other Old Testament book.

Job (Why the Righteous Suffer)

An index to the general scope of the remarkable book of Job is found in the name of its chief character. Job probably means "one assailed," "treated as an enemy," or "one who turns," the latter meaning becoming by implication, "the penitent." All are apt designations of the book; its pages record persecution and strife in the spiritual realm, of epic proportions at the end of which Job proves himself the true penitent.

The book is properly a drama, and from the literary point of view ranks as the greatest poem of its type in the world. A brief prologue shows Job in the bosom of his happy family, wealthy, respected, and thoroughly upright. But Satan appears before God and charges that Job is righteous only because God rewards well his goodness. Accordingly God commits Job to Satan's hand for testing. First his possessions and then his family are swept away by a series of catastrophes. Still Job remains faithful and just in the sight of God. Next Satan smites

Job's body with a loathsome disease. Overcome with misery Job bemoans his calamity, retaining still his unshakable loyalty to God. At this point, the scene being set, the body of the book opens. Three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, come to comfort Job. In discourses beautiful for power and dignity they argue with Job, the gist of their harangues being that Job has been punished for some secret sin. In eloquent reply Job indignantly repels the charge and stoutly vindicates his righteousness. Finally Elihu, a fourth and younger friend, who has been listening respectfully, speaks. His comments, while more penetrating and elevating than those of Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar, still fall short of the true issue. As he speaks, a terrific storm breaks, and out of the whirlwind the voice of God is heard. There follow poetical passages of wonderful beauty, as God describes the majesty and might of creation. God ceases and there is silence. Then Job, realizing for the first time his true position in the sight of the Almighty, cries out, "I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."¹ Before the infinite purity and power of God, his boasted righteousness is a vile thing. And as soon as Job grasps this fact,

¹ Job 42: 6.

his trial ends. The prologue tersely describes his restoration to his former prosperity.

This, in brief, is the content of one of the most profound portions of Scripture. Dealing with the inscrutable problem of permitted evil in a world governed by an all-wise Father, it reaches towering heights of poetry and spirituality. Clearly it is a 2 book, in trial and sorrow exemplifying the evil sense of the number, and in Job's final deliverance showing its favorable sense.

Song of Solomon (Love)

In Solomon's Song experiences of a peculiarly sacred order are set forth poetically and allegorically. The form of the book is dramatic; the subject is that of marital love. The treatment is exquisitely poetic with all the frank beauty of oriental symbolism. From earliest times the deeper meaning of Solomon's Song has been known to the spiritually minded. It speaks figuratively of the mystical relation between Christ and His Church. The allegory is one that is found throughout Scripture. In the Old Testament the relation of Jehovah to Israel is likened to that of husband to wife.¹ And in the New Testament Paul speaks of the church as the

¹ cf. Hosea.

“body” of Christ.¹ It is of this beautiful relationship that Solomon’s Song speaks. The ground it covers is holy ground. As F. W. Grant well says, “It is a song for the sanctuary; it is only in the sanctuary we can read it aright.” Obviously it fills the third and sacred place of manifestation in this Pentateuch of experience.

Ecclesiastes (“Under the Sun”)

Ecclesiastes or the book of “The Preacher” is a striking presentation of the futility of human wisdom and philosophy. The Preacher, who can probably be identified with Solomon, tastes all forms of worldly activity in his pursuit for happiness. Study, sensuality, culture, building, mechanical skill, the making of books—all are tried by him only to be cast aside with the weary comments, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity” and “There is nothing new under the sun.”² In its general philosophical tone the book reflects extreme boredom and cynicism. The Preacher, son of the King in Jerusalem, though endowed with great riches, power, and wisdom, finds no peace. All pleasures, intellectual as well as carnal, lead but to discouragement and ennui. The

¹ Ephesians 3.

² Ecclesiastes 1: 2; 1: 9, etc.

end finds the Preacher a bankrupt in the things that count for eternity. He has tried the world and all that it gives and has proved it wanting.

There is manifestly no direct presentation of the gospel in this book. Nor would one take for his guide of life the philosophy of the jaded Preacher. Yet by implication Ecclesiastes teaches great lessons. The failure of the Preacher, wisest among men, is a striking evidence of man's inability through his own powers to grasp the eternal. The vivid picture of the ultimate futility of things earthly points by contrast to the enduring beauty and value of heavenly things.

The relation of such a book as this to its position as fourth is perfectly obvious. Ecclesiastes is a book of testing and of experience, the testing in this case being that of the world and all it offers.

Proverbs (Wisdom)

For the summing up of the Experience Books, Proverbs is admirably suited. Composed exclusively of short, pithy sayings, weighted with divine wisdom, it is an admirable Deuteronomic conclusion for the Fourth Pentateuch. The will of God is expressed in terms of practical maxims related to actual experiences. Solomon is tra-

ditionally the author of most of the book, although it may well be that he acted chiefly as compiler. In morality and practicality the many short proverbs that make up this compilation have never been surpassed. Responsibility for a righteous walk in accordance with their teaching follows their authoritative statement. The appropriateness of 5, the number of responsibility, as the symbol of Proverbs is thus plain.

VII

THE CHRISTIAN SCRIPTURES— FIFTH PENTATEUCH

The last of the five Pentateuchs into which Scripture is divided is the New Testament. That these twenty-seven books, setting forth in all their glory the life and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, should occupy the fifth or Deuteronomic position is not without meaning. Just as Deuteronomy is the recapitulation and consummation of the original Pentateuch, so the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures. This important fact is everywhere apparent in the New Testament. The apostolic writers quote constantly from all portions of the Old Testament. Christ's life is unfolded in the light of the prophets, His work is interpreted as the fulfillment of the ancient oracles, while He Himself in times of crisis quoted the Old Testament as supreme authority. Indeed it is not too much to say that without the Old Testament background the New Testament cannot be understood in the fullness of its divine message. The two portions of Scripture are truly one, indissolubly linked through a real organic unity.

The Gospels

Obviously enough, the first or Genesis place in the fifth Pentateuch is occupied by the Gospels. As every reader of the Bible knows, the story of Christ's life is four times repeated, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John being the authors. The individual characteristics of these gospels¹, however, is not so generally known. Why are there four? Are they supplementary in incident, so that together they build up a complete biography of the life of Christ? Or is their aim different from that of the usual biography?

The latter, of course, is true. The gospels are not biography in the commonly accepted sense of the term. Each of them is too incomplete to fit this literary classification. They all show gaps and pass over in silence years that the ordinary biographer would deem of importance. A simple examination of their contents makes this clear. Two of the gospels, Matthew and Luke, give considerable place to the birth of Christ. Mark begins with Christ a grown man, and John, apart from his profound prologue in which he asserts the pre-incarnation existence of the Saviour, also begins his narrative with Jesus a grown man. Again, only one gospel (Luke)

¹ The word "gospel" means "good news."

refers in any way to the youth of our Lord and in that case the reference is to but one incident, the famous scene of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the temple.¹ All four gospels, however, place great and detailed emphasis on the three years of Christ's public ministry, and all of them, proportionately speaking, record with fullest detail and maximum emphasis His death and resurrection. It is plain, then, that rather than being formal biographies, the gospels are separate accounts of Christ's public ministry, crucifixion, and resurrection, prefaced in three cases² with comparatively brief introductory material.

On the basis of subject matter, the gospels fall into two groups: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, called the synoptic gospels, because they have many incidents in common which fit together into a coherent synopsis of the Scriptural facts about Christ; John, in date far later than the synoptics and in method and subject matter much different.

There is in the first chapter of Ezekiel's prophecy a strange vision. Out of a whirlwind and a fiery cloud appear four living creatures, having four faces—the face of a man, a lion, an ox, and

¹ Luke 2.

² Matthew, Luke, John.

an eagle.¹ Since the first centuries of the Christian era, these living creatures have been regarded as symbolical of the four gospels. As prophetic interpretation this may be questionable. Nevertheless, the symbolism has much to commend it as an aid to memory; it offers an excellent means of differentiating the salient characteristics of each of the gospels. Thus the lion is said to stand for Matthew, the kingly gospel; the ox represents Mark, the gospel of service; the man represents Luke, the gospel of the humanity of Jesus; and the eagle represents John, which in lofty truth soars above the synoptics.

Matthew (King-Messiah)

We find, then, that each gospel has its distinctive purpose. Matthew was written by a Jew for the Jews. Its purpose is to prove Christ the promised Messiah of the Jews. From the genealogy in the first chapter, where Christ is shown to be the Son of Abraham and His Davidic throne-rights legally established, the Jewish element is marked throughout the entire book. Time and again Matthew refers to the Old Testament prophecies as having come true in Christ.

¹ Ezekiel 1: 4-10.

And as the Messiah was to rule as King, the lion of regal place among the beasts is an apt symbol for this gospel.

Mark (Servant)

Of contrasting character is Mark, who writes for the Romans. The briefest of the gospels, this book is both the most direct in method and vivid in style of the four. It has been well said that Mark writes with the forceful brevity of a journalist. The emphasis is on Christ's power as a worker of miracles, but at the same time His self-sacrificing service is stressed. The whole presentation is such as to appeal to the forthright power of the Roman mind. And of all this the ox, an animal of strength yet given to lowly service, is the fitting symbol.

Luke (Son of Man)

Luke is the most literary of the four evangelists. By profession a doctor, he shares with Paul the distinction of having had the advantages of higher education. It is evident from the first words of Luke's gospel that he pursued his task in the manner of the trained historian, comparing existing sources in order to arrive at the truth of his subject. Indeed the historical detail

of this gospel has been proved of unimpeachable accuracy. Thus Luke was splendidly fitted not only for presenting a picture of his Lord but also for his great task as historian of the primitive church, for, as we shall later see, the Book of Acts is from his pen.

Like the other gospels, Luke's presentation is addressed to a particular audience and has a particular purpose. In line with its author's training, it is written so as to appeal especially to the Greek mind. The beauty and polish of the style, the nicety of detail are characteristics that would naturally appeal to the cultivated Hellenist. Furthermore, the central purpose, which is the setting forth of the full humanity of Jesus, is one which would also interest the Greeks, who had a peculiar reverence for man. This purpose is most marked throughout the book. "Son of Man" is the leading epithet applied by Luke to Christ. Unlike Matthew, who, in line with his Jewish purpose of proving the Messiahship of Christ, traces His genealogy back to Abraham, Luke follows the genealogy clear through to Adam, the father of humanity. Yet the essential Deity of Christ is not once obscured. As some one has succinctly stated, Luke shows Christ to be the "Human-Divine One."

That the symbol for this book should be the man is, therefore, entirely fitting.

John (Son of God)

Passing on to the Fourth Gospel, one enters a different realm. While the synoptics may be said to be carefully localized in message and theme, John's Gospel is universal in appeal and transcendent in its picture of the Christ. Writing generations after the tremendous events which he records, the beloved disciple sees the subject with the philosophical insight of consecrated old age. Instead of the ordered narrative of Luke, he makes a selection of leading incidents and discourses, designed to throw into high relief the glorious Deity of Christ. Into a style of childlike simplicity he packs a fulness of meaning that the most profound cannot fathom.

From the mighty opening words, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was God," to the artless beauty of the close, "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written," John's gospel is unique. His familiar words breathe a spirit of quiet and worship that turns the soul to Christ as

Lord and Saviour. The old symbolism of Eze-kiel, then, accords well with this gospel; as the eagle soars far above man and beast, so in John the reader is lifted to heavenly heights as Christ is set forth as the divine Son of God. And reversing the phrase used of Luke, we find in John a portrayal of the "Divine-Human One."

The accompanying tabulation¹ will help to summarize and keep clear the varying purposes and characteristics of the four gospels.

The Acts (Witness)

Second in the fifth Pentateuch is the book of Acts. Of its Exodus and 2 character there can be little question. In the original Exodus God's *earthly* chosen people are called out from Egypt and led away to a separated existence. In Acts, or the New Testament Exodus, God's *heavenly* chosen people, the Christian Church, are led out of and separated from the world. Luke's historical account of this great fact makes up the book of Acts. The narrative is a direct continuation of the gospels. Beginning with the ascension, it records the birth of the Church on the day of the Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given to the waiting disciples, sets forth the

¹Adapted from "Gates and Keys to Bible Books," Robinson, p.292.

	SYNOPTIC GOSPELS				FOURTH GOSPEL
<i>Gospel</i>	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John	
<i>Symbol</i>	Lion	Ox	Man	Eagle	
<i>Author Writes As</i>	Zealous Jew	Vigorous Journalist	Literary Historian	Contemplative Philosopher	
<i>Shows Christ As</i>	King-Messiah	Servant (Ministering)	Son of Man Human-Divine One	Son of God Divine-Human One	
<i>Written for</i>	Jews	Romans	Greeks	All Men	
<i>Genealogy Traced</i> ¹	From Abraham		From Adam	From God	

¹ It is in keeping with Mark's picture of Christ as the Servant, who came not to be ministered unto but to minister, that he omits any genealogical reference; a Servant's genealogy was not generally investigated.

ministry of Peter to the Jews, and gives in detail the expanding and victorious mission of Paul to the Gentiles. Although the traditional title is the Acts of the Apostles, the prime mover behind all that happens is the Holy Spirit. As in Exodus, the controlling hand of God is everywhere apparent; in no book is the fact of divine guidance more prominent.

The Pauline Epistles

A group of books now comes to view as filling the third position in the New Testament Pentateuch. And right it is that the epistles of Paul should occupy this Levitical place. We have already seen that three is the number of the sanctuary, the number of manifestation. In the fourteen Pauline Epistles¹ the apex of Christian doctrine is reached. While the gospels and the Acts contain the source of all the later teaching about Christ, in the Pauline Epistles these seed truths germinate into a logical and complete setting forth of the Christian faith. Here is the gracious redemptive purpose of God made manifest in all its fulness. Here is the revelation of the "mystery" of Christ's Church. Here indeed is the sanctuary of the New Testament. It may

¹ Hebrews is included in this category, although its Pauline authorship may be open to question.

safely be said that no portion of the Bible is more indispensable for the Christian than these epistles of Paul; they are both the sourcebook and the textbook for the Christian religion.

A word should be said about the epistolary form of writing. An epistle, of course, is a letter. And the Biblical epistles are simply letters of varying length, addressed either to churches or to individuals. Able organizer and administrator that he was, the Apostle Paul found it necessary to keep in touch with the numerous churches that were founded as the result of his missionary journeys. Differences of doctrine, questions of discipline, problems of church order all required the counsel of Paul. So the epistles were written, the great apostle utilizing spare moments and even his time of suffering in prison to pass on to his charges the priceless heritage of these matchless letters. In most cases, the epistles are addressed to the churches in various cities, but in a few instances individuals are the recipients. Emanating as they did from the great leaders of the primitive church, the epistles were treasured and their authoritative teaching recognized. Thus they found a place in Scripture.

In our brief consideration of each of the Pauline Epistles, we shall follow not the usual

order of the Bible but rather an order that is more nearly chronological.

I and II Thessalonians (Second Advent)

I and II Thessalonians, the earliest of Paul's writings, are noteworthy for their completeness of doctrine at an early date, all the essential truths of Christianity having been taught the Thessalonians by Paul. In both letters the Second Coming of Christ has a prominent place. In the First Epistle it is used to inspire and comfort the converts. In the Second Epistle, one particular phase of the Coming is explained. The Thessalonian disciples had erroneously confused the persecutions which they were suffering with "The Day of the Lord," the manifestation of Christ in judgment. Having been taught to expect deliverance from this judgment through the gathering together of the believers in Christ, they were greatly perplexed. Paul's teachings resolved their difficulties.

I Corinthians (Principles of Christian Conduct)

Among the major writings of Paul are I and II Corinthians. The first letter to this church springs from the depths of the apostle's feeling. Its immediate occasion was an inquiry from the

Corinthian Church regarding marriage and the use of meats offered to idols. In addition to answering these queries, Paul had also to rebuke a case of gross immorality which had been left unpunished by the church. Furthermore, he was greatly disturbed by the prevalence of strife and controversy among the Corinthian Christians. With noble eloquence born of deepest feeling Paul deals with all of these matters, setting forth at the same time profound spiritual truth, as in the great thirteenth chapter on love and the wonderful treatment of the resurrection in the fifteenth chapter.

II Corinthians (Vindication of Paul's Apostleship)

Called forth by the effect of the First Epistle, II Corinthians has for its central theme the vindication of Paul's apostleship. While giving thanks that some of the evils which led to the first letters were removed, he continues the fight against divisive sects within the church and strenuously defends his authority by an eloquent recital of the origin of his apostleship and his experiences in the service of the gospel.

Galatians (Magna Charta of Christian Liberty)

In the Galatians, a semi-barbarian people who

came into Greece from Gaul, Paul found hearers who accepted the gospel with unusual readiness. However, after he had left them, certain Jews appeared, teaching a mixture of Judaism and Christianity. To the "fickle Galatians," as he calls them, Paul addresses an epistle marked for its logical power. The theme of Galatians is the gospel of grace, which Paul defends against the erroneous reversion to the Law into which this church has fallen. With the utmost clarity and forcefulness Paul proves that justification is by faith alone and not by works. That the spiritual perfection of the believer springs not from keeping the Mosaic Law, but that it is the result of the gracious working of the Holy Spirit was Paul's contention. Thus he shows the spiritual freedom of the believer in a great epistle that has been called "The Magna Charta of Christian liberty."

Romans (Justification by Faith)

In Romans Paul sets forth the Gospel of Christ with consummate logic. The Epistle, written to a church which the apostle had never seen, is in the nature of an apologetic designed to instruct the Romans in correct doctrine. Its theme is the gospel in "the very widest possible

designation of the whole body of redemption truth." Paul expounds this gospel with masterful logic, showing first the universality of sin, then explaining the process of justification by faith, proceeding to the work of sanctification through the indwelling Holy Spirit, dealing with the place of Israel in relation to the gospel, and closing with practical applications of the great truths of the Epistle.

Philemon (Pardon)

The shortest of Paul's writings is Philemon, the first of the Prison Epistles, written while the apostle was under guard in Rome. In this personal letter to his Colossian friend, Philemon, Paul pleads for the reinstatement in his friend's service and affection of a runaway slave, Onesimus by name. The epistle is a marvel of courtesy and tact.

Colossians (Christ "All and in All")

The occasion of Colossians, the next of the Prison Epistles, was an heretical doctrine which had begun to infect an otherwise sound church. The error in question was two-fold; it advocated a false asceticism, akin to legalistic Judaism, and it tended toward a mystical, fanciful worship of

angels. The heresy is met by Paul's beautiful development of the sufficiency and preëminence of Christ, whom he declares to be "all and in all." It is in Colossians that the Christology of Paul is perhaps most fully developed.

Ephesians (Mystery)

Unlike most of the larger Pauline Epistles, Ephesians is not an answer to a definite situation in a particular church to which it is addressed. On the contrary, it was probably intended for general circulation among the churches at large; the words "to the Ephesians" are not found in the best manuscripts.

However this may be, Ephesians is of the highest importance. Akin in theme and tone to Colossians, it sets forth the "mystery" of the church. According to Paul, the true church (all believers regardless of doctrinal affiliation who have been regenerated by personal acceptance of Christ) is the body of Christ, joined to Him as a bride in mystical union. This is the great New Testament doctrine of the church, hitherto hidden, except for its allegorical mention in the Song of Solomon.

Philippians (Rejoice)

If Paul could be said to have had a favorite

church, it must have been the group of believers to whom he addressed this letter. Founded in response to the famous "Macedonian call,"¹ the church at Philippi represented the first planting of the gospel in Europe. It seems to have kept the faith with singular steadfastness and to have cherished in loving affection the apostle, for on more than one occasion it sent him gifts. Far from a logical, doctrinal treatise, this letter, couched in the most affectionate terms, deals informally with Christian experience. Paul opens his heart to his beloved readers, as he joyously writes of the glorious spiritual experiences of the true servant of Christ. The tone of joy is especially noteworthy in view of the fact that Paul wrote from his Roman prison, where he was chained to members of the Praetorian guard.

I Timothy and Titus (Church Order)

II Timothy (Paul's Valedictory)

Three short letters, known as the Pastoral Epistles, complete, with the exception of Hebrews, the Pauline writings. All three are addressed to friends not churches, and all have a common theme. The apostolic age was soon to

¹ Acts 16.

end. Hitherto Paul had directly supervised the order and organization of the churches, but after his passing this could no longer be the case. Hence he was guided to place in written form careful instructions for church order. In I Timothy these instructions are most fully stated. Qualifications of bishops¹ and deacons are given, conduct of worshippers considered, and the walk of a good minister of the gospel outlined. Titus covers the same ground, but more briefly, while II Timothy contains Paul's last counsel to his dear friend and fellow-laborer, Timothy. Paul is especially careful to give warning of the apostasy or turning from the faith that will signalize the last times. II Timothy is the apostle's valedictory and in it occur the stouthearted words of the greatest warrior of the Cross—"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."²

¹ The word meant merely an "overseer," and in no way implied ecclesiastical pomp or ceremony.

² II Timothy 4: 6-9.

Hebrews (A Better Covenant)

Although the authorship of the great Epistle to the Hebrews is a controverted question, there is good warrant for attributing it to Paul. The letter is addressed to the Hebrew Christians and sets forth incontestable proof of the fact that Christ is both the end and the fulfillment of Judaism. The keynote is the word "better." In a series of comparisons Christ is shown to be better than the angels, than Moses, and, in His priestly office, than the Aaronic priesthood. His high-priesthood after the order of Melchizedek is explained. The New Covenant in Christ is proved superior to the old covenants, and the sacrifices and offerings are elucidated as types of Christ's one perfect and sufficient sacrifice, the atonement on the Cross which supplants the ritualistic sacrifices and forever opens for all who believe the way of access to God. After a section of practical exhortations the book closes. So illuminating is its explanation of the Judaistic forms of worship that it constitutes an invaluable commentary upon Leviticus and other portions of the Pentateuch in which the sacrifices, offerings, and priesthood are described.

The Catholic Epistles

Occupying the fourth place in the New Testa-

ment are the Catholic or General Epistles, a small group of letters by James, Peter, John, and Jude. The word "Catholic," of course, means "universal," these letters being called Catholic because they are general in nature and are addressed to no particular churches or individuals¹ but to the church at large. The fittingness of their fourth position is seen in the fact that four is the number of earthly trial, and these books condition the believer's walk in the world.

James (Works)

The Epistle of James is a letter of eminently sensible counsel addressed originally to the Christian Jews. The author was probably James, the brother of the Lord. He writes in a straightforward practical manner and expresses with rare earnestness his sound ethical advice. This epistle bears considerable resemblance to Proverbs in the Old Testament.

I Peter (Compendium of Doctrine)

I Peter is a brief letter in which are summed up with admirable precision and force all of the essential doctrines of the faith. Especial emphasis is placed by Peter on the atonement, and on the

¹ To this statement II and III John are exceptions.

practical aspects of the Christian life amid persecution and unbelief.

II Peter (False Teachers)

II Peter bears considerable likeness to II Timothy. As did Paul, Peter here looks forward to the time of his martyrdom, yet is able to write with the utmost joy. He gives also the same warning of the apostasy or turning from the faith, which is found in II Timothy.

I John (Love and Fellowship)

The three epistles of John are in style markedly like the fourth gospel. I John is the most important. It has been well called "a family letter from the Father to His 'little children'." The tone is tenderly intimate; the emphasis is upon God's love and the fellowship of believers with one another and with God.

II and III John (The Truth)

II John and III John are just personal notes—the former addressed to a certain "lady and her children;" the latter to Gaius, probably a prominent Christian of Corinth. Short though they are, however, they teach valuable lessons regarding the Christian life, and their stress upon

maintaining the truth is most salutary for these days.

Jude (The Apostasy)

The last of the epistolary writings is Jude. The author, a brother of James, has for his brief letter a single theme—the apostasy. His message is a timely one for these last days in which we live. Jude urges Christians to unite and “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”¹ His warning of the departure from faith is vivid and powerful.

Revelation (Unveiling Christ's Final Supremacy)

We come now to Revelation, the capstone and consummation of the entire Word of God. There can be no mistaking its fifth or Deuteronomic position, for here is described the gathering together of all things in Christ. The author is John, and the book records visions vouchsafed him during his exile on the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea. The traditional title, “The Revelation² of St. John the Divine,” is inaccurate, John being but the instrument through whom this revelation was made known. The first verse of

¹ Jude 3.

² Revelation means “unveiling”; the book unveils the Glory of Christ.

the book gives the correct title, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." John uses all the resources of prophetic symbolism and oriental imagery to make known the glories of the coming Christ. Here prophecy is fulfilled. The future course of the world order is given, the days of tribulation and judgment described, Christ's visible coming in glory and power set forth, and His reign over all the earth foretold. The last great struggle between good and evil, God and man, is seen, and the consummation of all things envisioned in a glorious foreglimpse of eternity.¹ "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat

¹ Chap. 21 and 22.

upon the throne said, Behold I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.”¹

With this glorious vision coupled with a note of joyous expectation the Bible closes. “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen, Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”²

¹ Rev. 21: 1-7.

² Revelation 22: 20.

VIII

LIST OF KEY-WORDS

First Pentateuch

1. Genesis.....*Beginnings*
2. Exodus.....*The Passover*
3. Leviticus.....*Holiness*
4. Numbers.....*Wandering*
5. Deteronomy.....*Second Law*

Second Pentateuch

1. Joshua.....*Conquest*
2. Judges.....*Rescue from Ruin*
Ruth.....*Kinsman-Redeemer*
3. Samuel and Kings.....*Monarchy*
4. Ezra and Nehemiah.....*Rebuilding*
Esther.....*Guidance*
5. Chronicles.....*Monarchy-Recapitulated*

Third Pentateuch

1. Isaiah.....*Fifth Gospel*
2. Jeremiah and Lamentations.. *Woe upon Judah*
4. Ezekiel.....*Prophet-Priest*
3. Daniel.....*World History Revealed*
5. Hosea.....*Unfaithful Israel*
Job.....*Locust Plague*
Amos.....*Warnings*
Obadiah.....*Fall of Edom*

Jonah.....	<i>Unwilling Missionary</i>
Micah.....	<i>"Hear Ye"</i>
Nahum.....	<i>Fall of Nineveh</i>
Habakkuk.....	<i>Justification by Faith</i>
Zephaniah.....	<i>Day of the Lord</i>
Haggai.....	<i>Rebuild the Temple</i>
Zechariah.....	<i>Symbolic Visions</i>
Malachi.....	<i>Judgment on Restored Remnant</i>

Fourth Pentateuch

1. Psalms.....*Songs, Hymns*
2. Job.....*Why the Righteous Suffer*
3. Song of Solomon.....*Love*
4. Ecclesiastes.....*Under the Sun*
5. Proverbs.....*Wisdom*

Fifth Pentateuch

1. Matthew.....*King-Messiah*
Mark.....*Servant*
Luke.....*Son of Man*
John.....*Son of God*
2. The Acts.....*Witness*
3. I and II Thessalonians.....*Second Advent*
I Corinthians.....*Principles of Christian
Conduct*
II Corinthians.....*Vindication of Paul's
Apostleship*
Galatians.....*Magna Charta of Chris-
tian Liberty*

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